



**NORWICH HIGHWAYS AGENCY COMMITTEE**

**10am to 11.35am**

**19 September 2013**

**Present:**

<b>County Councillors:</b>	<b>City Councillors:</b>
Bremner (substitute V for Councillor Harrison)	Stonard (vice chair) (in the chair) (V)
Shaw (substitute for (V) for Councillor Adams)	Harris (V)
	Carlo
	Gayton
	Grahame

\*(V) voting member

**Apologies:** County Councillors Adams (chair), Harrison and Hebborn

## **1. PETITIONS**

### **Petition 1 - Heigham Street/Nelson street junction**

Councillor Stammers, Mancroft ward, presented the following petition:

"This petition is calling for the councils to allocate funding for pedestrian safety measures to be installed at the Heigham Street/Nelson street junction"

The transportation and network manager, Norwich City Council, responded on behalf of the committee as follows:

"I am aware that there has been a long standing desire among local residents and members to see pedestrian crossing facilities introduced at this junction. An assessment was carried out a few years ago which supported the need for such facilities and for a while this location sat towards the top of the pedestrian crossing priority list but never high enough to qualify for funding

As other schemes were built it eventually made it to the top of the priority list in 2010; the same year that the integrated transport grant suffered an 80% cut. This meant that the budget available for transport improvements in the city reduced from around the million pound mark to £220,000. Given the estimated cost of providing pedestrian crossing facilities is £250,000 the scheme became unaffordable.

Since 2010 the annual budget has varied between £200,000 and £300,000. However this is for all transport improvements, including safety improvements, cycle schemes, traffic management schemes as well as pedestrian crossings.

In the current climate it is difficult to see when money will be available for such a scheme. At your meeting in November you will be asked to support the proposals for the 2014-2015 budget, and while this has not yet been finalised current draft budget shows £50,000 available for pedestrian crossing improvements.”

In response to Councillor Stammers’ supplementary question, the transportation network manager confirmed that there was only £50,000 allocated for pedestrian crossing improvements for the entire city in the 2014-15 budget. She also pointed out that a zebra crossing, which would need to be some distance from the junction would be away from pedestrian desire lines and would not be used.

At the chair’s discretion, members of the committee commented on the government grant reduction in 2010 from £10m to £2m and the corresponding reduction in the budget available to this committee for transport improvements across the city. A member queried the use of public money for the northern distributor road (NDR) and was reminded by the chair that both the county and city councils supported it as part of the Norwich area transportation strategy (NATS). Members were advised that the committee would be considering bids for local transport plan funding at its next meeting.

## **Petition 2 – Grove Road zebra crossing**

County Councillor Emma Corlett, Town Close division, asked the following question:

"The Town Close Labour Community Team and I initiated the petition in response to the considerable concern expressed by residents who regularly visit the parade of shops in Grove Road. The 335 signatories have signed in support of the construction of a zebra crossing that will make crossing the road safer near these shops.

We have been told of many 'near misses' as pedestrians try to get across the road and lengthy waits before residents felt it safe to cross the road. Elderly people and local shopkeepers were the two most concerned groups of people. In particular our survey of shopkeepers revealed that every day they see several near misses and elderly people and those with mobility issues 'stranded' on either side of the road near the shops.

The overall general feeling of local residents is that improvements to crossing safety in Grove Road are long overdue and disappointment that Grove Road seems to be consistently overlooked and improvements have yet to take place."

The transportation and network manager, Norwich City Council, responded on behalf of the committee as follows:

“As members are aware there is a priority list for pedestrian crossings, which last year we split into two; one list for major schemes over £100k involving traffic signals or major junction improvements and the other for schemes under £100k such as zebra crossings or pedestrian refuges. The Grove Road request for a zebra crossing ranked at number 3 in the latter list, and funding was made available for the top two sites which were Bluebell Road and Hall Road, both of which due for discussion at this meeting.

Sites can also get moved down the list if new requests come in that are ranked higher in priority in terms of difficulty in crossing or accident records. This is what has happened to the Grove Road site in the past, and the same is true this year. The request for a zebra crossing on St Augustine’s Street that was mentioned briefly at your July meeting has been assessed to have a higher priority than Grove Road, leaving Grove Road as the second priority. That said, as I mentioned in my previous answer, we are still finalising next year’s programme and at present I am hopeful that it will be possible to accommodate both the St Augustine’s and the Grove Road locations in the programme for 14-15.”

## **2. PUBLIC/MEMBER QUESTIONS**

### **Question 1 – Push the Pedalways – Chapelfield Gardens**

Ms O’Brien, Little Bethel Court, asked the following question:

“Did the council consult The Garden History Society, formed specifically to protect historic and listed gardens before arranging for large numbers of cyclists to start using the Push the Pedalways route inside Chapelfield Gardens, in addition to those forced in when Chapelfield North has to accommodate two way HGV and bus traffic? Are they aware that Chapelfield will become a cycling hub for the city centre and its role as a garden degraded?”

The transportation and network manager, Norwich City Council, responded on behalf of the committee as follows:

“I need to start by apologising; the cycle network plan appended to the report shows the current route of the pink pedalway diagonally through the gardens that is part of the network launched in June 2012 rather than the proposed route.

While developing the St Stephens and Chapel Field North project we decided to provide a better route for the pink pedalway that does not involve cyclists mixing with pedestrians on the busy diagonal route. The route now runs from the toucan crossing on Chapel Field Road around the outside of the gardens on the shared use footpath / cycle way adjacent to the roundabout to the west end of Chapel Field North. At that point cyclists would have the choice of either using the new entrance to the Gardens and the quieter north avenue or riding inbound along Chapel Field North, which becomes two-way. The route then turns into Little Bethel Street.

These proposals were subject to public consultation as part of the St Stephens and Chapel Field North consultation in November last year and this committee agreed that the project should proceed in March. Push the pedalways will improve the whole of the pink pedalway and is complementary to the agreed changes that will be made through the St Stephens and Chapel Field North project.

The Garden History Society was not consulted as part of the consultation on St Stephens and Chapel Field North. Several other heritage groups, including most importantly English Heritage, were consulted. I would be happy to add the Garden History Society to our list for any future consultation."

By way of a supplementary question, Ms O'Brien said that the Chapelfield Society had not been consulted on the proposals. The transportation and network manager said that the council's design, conservation and landscape manager had met with the chair of the society and that Councillor Bremner, who was vice chair of the committee at the time, had also met with residents to discuss the proposals. The current situation was that cycling was permitted in the park but there were no dedicated cycle routes.

## **Question 2 – Push the Pedalways – Chapelfield Gardens**

Mrs Harrison, Chapel Field North, asked the following question:

"My question concerns existing and planned cycle routes that the council intends to introduce in Chapelfield Gardens, involving greatly increased numbers of cyclists. It is more than likely that much of this new ' Push the Pedal-ways' traffic, which is intended for the North Walk, will pursue a short cut diagonally across the historic gardens and a network of cycle lanes will develop in an area intended for leisure use.

What plans does the council have to ensure that cyclists keep to the designated paths, ensuring the safety of all the other users of the gardens, especially families with young children and elderly walkers? "

The transportation and network manager, Norwich City Council, responded on behalf of the committee as follows:

"Cyclists currently use the gardens because it is an attractive place and because some of the surrounding streets are intimidating for less confident cyclists. Considerate cycling is allowed. As I explained in my answer to the previous question our plans will help to influence cyclists to use parts of the gardens that are most suitable for cycling. We expect that by signing people towards the new route and by making the new route easier to use than the congested diagonal route fewer people will ride through the centre of the gardens even though it is a slightly shorter route. Furthermore the new wider entrances will reduce the competition for space between cyclist and pedestrians that sometimes occurs at the existing narrow entrances."

### **Question 3 – Grove Walk and Grove Avenue rat run**

Councillor Little, on behalf of Town Close ward councillors and residents, asked the following question:

"Residents in Grove Walk and Grove Avenue have for years complained about their roads being used as a 'rat run' and that vehicles go well above the current 30 mph limits. Town Close ward councillors have recently sought the opinions of residents in these areas and there is an overwhelming consensus that some form of traffic calming is still required. There were also several comments regarding non-route buses and HGVs also using these roads as short cuts. Could the Norwich Highways Agency committee, please review these two roads to assess if and how these issues can be addressed?"

The transportation and network manager, Norwich City Council, responded on behalf of the committee as follows:

"The issues in this area were looked at in detail back in the 1990's / early 2000s, firstly when the park and ride service was introduced at the Livestock Market in the mid 1990s and a few years later when a traffic action plan was drafted.

As part of a package of measures to encourage people to use the newly introduced park and ride service in about 1994 a controlled parking zone was introduced removing commuter and student parking from the streets and a bus gate was created between Grove Road and Brazengate in the morning peak hour, removing what was then a popular rat run and giving buses a time advantage over general traffic.

A few years later there followed the development of a traffic action plan for the Grove Road / Grove Walk / Trafford Road area. There were several public engagement events held with residents in the area to determine what the traffic problems were and how best they could be solved. It was difficult to achieve an agreement among the community as to what was needed and at the time the use of widespread traffic calming measures or road closures was not supported. In the end the scheme that was implemented involved some changes to parking arrangements, traffic calming on Cecil Road outside the Hewett School and a minor junction realignment.

Budgets for area wide traffic management measures no longer exist and the development of area wide traffic action plans can no longer be supported. There are many areas of the city that never benefited from such a plan and to even if funding were available it may be preferable to consider these areas first before returning to the Grove Road / Grove Walk area. The question of unsuitable traffic using residential areas is not unique to this area and is one that is difficult to resolve without costly physical measures and where budgets are so limited."

Councillor Little by way of a supplementary question said that it was difficult to explain to the local community that no action was being taken when their responses to the survey two years ago prioritised traffic management schemes in this area. He

asked that the bus gate was enforced. The transportation and network manager said that she would raise it with the police whose responsibility was to enforce the bus gate. She also advised the committee that the cost of a traffic regulation order to restrict heavy goods vehicles was expensive and could set a precedent of requests for other areas in a similar position.

### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None of the members had any interests to declare.

### **4. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** to approve the accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2013.

### **5. PUSH THE PEDALWAYS – SUCCESSFUL CYCLE CITY AMBITION GRANT**

The transportation and network manager introduced the report.

During discussion members welcomed the report and noted that the majority of funding for the scheme was from central government. Members also noted that Councillor Stonard would be chairing the executive board for the project and that there would be considerable consultation with the public and ward councillors on all schemes. The aim was to provide cycle facilities that were safe to use by an unaccompanied twelve year old. A member also pointed out that safe cycle routes would benefit pedestrians and motorists, and was good for the environment.

A member referred to the move to replace pelican crossings with zebra crossings and expressed concern that inconsiderate cyclists might present a hazard to visually impaired people at zebra crossings. The transportation and network manager said that zebra crossings were roughly a third of the cost of pelican crossings and there was no evidence to suggest that zebra crossings were particularly unsafe for the blind and visually impaired. However there would be considerable public consultation when a scheme for a crossing was proposed, including with organisations for the blind.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to:

- (1) welcome the award of the cycle city ambition grant and the opportunity it brings to improve critical cycling infrastructure;
- (2) note that further reports on key elements of the proposals will be presented to the committee for approval in due course.

### **6. PUSH THE PEDALWAYS: NORTH PARK AVENUE TO UEA CROSSING**

The transportation and network manager introduced the report, and said that there had been one further representation in support of the proposal and asking for warning signs on the approaches to the crossing, which were to be provided.

Councillor Bremner, as the local member for the University division and ward, said that he supported the scheme which would benefit local residents.

Members noted that this was the first push the pedalways scheme to come forward for approval.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to:

- (1) note the results of the consultation;
- (2) ask the head of city development to complete the statutory processes associated with the traffic and speed regulation orders as shown on plan number 13HD 034 05 and arrange for the scheme to be implemented.

## **7. PROPOSED HALL ROAD ZEBRA CROSSING**

The transportation and network manager introduced the report and replied to members questions. She explained that the National Institute for the Blind had not been able to provide a general policy statement on the use of zebra crossings. The Institute could conduct impact assessments on individual schemes and that as a fee was required, this could be considered where a proposed crossing would be used by a large proportion of blind or visually impaired people, such as near the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind on Magpie Road. She pointed out that 2.7% of the population were blind or partially sighted and therefore 97.3% would benefit from the introduction of zebra crossings.

During discussion members considered the proposed scheme and the comments received from the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind, and it was suggested that there should be an ongoing dialogue with the Association.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to:

- (1) note the results of the consultation;
- (2) ask the head of city development to complete the necessary statutory processes associated with the installation of the zebra crossing as shown on plan number 13/HD/35/02/B and arrange for the scheme to be implemented;
- (3) note that Councillor Gayton will liaise with the chief executive of the Norfolk and Norwich Association for the Blind to facilitate discussion on proposed zebra crossings.

## **8. NORWICH AREA TRANSPORTATION STRATEGY (NATS) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The principal planner (infrastructure and economic strategy), Norfolk County Council introduced the report, and together with the city agency/NATS manager, Norfolk County Council, answered members questions.

During discussion the chair reminded members that both the county and city councils supported NATS, which included the northern distributor road (NDR), and that sustainable transport was a key part of the strategy. Members were advised that there had been widespread consultation on NATS and that the current consultation involved those directly affected by the NDR; landowners and those living in the parishes along the route. The implementation plan set out what had been delivered and what would be delivered, subject to available funding. A member pointed out that in the summertime before the opening of the southern bypass, traffic for the Broads and coast were queued up on the outer ring road. The NDR would make a difference and reduce traffic from the city centre.

Discussion ensued on the proposal to close Westlegate. Councillor Shaw said that he was strongly opposed to this element of the implementation plan and that he considered that this would cause traffic congestion from Westlegate to the Chapel Field roundabout. Members were advised that there would be an opportunity for the members to consider this proposal at a future meeting of the committee.

Members also commented on the proposed improvements to Wymondham railway station and requested that public toilets were provided at the station. Members welcomed the initiative to pilot the use of smartcards and looked forward to it rolling out across the Norfolk bus network. The committee was advised that the train operator and councils had already improved integrated train and bus travel including by funding improvements to Norwich Station to make the bus stops more conspicuous. Members welcomed the importance of a well integrated public transport system and it was suggested that gaps should be identified and filled.

**RESOLVED:**

- (1) to endorse the updated implementation plan, subject to noting Councillor Shaw's reservations in regard to the proposed closure of Westlegate and comments in relation to improvements at Wymondham station;
- (2) unanimously, to recommend the updated NATS implementation plan to the county council's cabinet for adoption.

**9. AGENCY AGREEMENT – REVIEW**

The capital programme manager, Norfolk County Council, presented the report.

The chair said that the city council valued the Highways Agency agreement and wished for it to continue.

During discussion the head of city development services, Norwich City Council, referred to the report and answered members' questions on the closer alignment with civil parking enforcement (CPE) with the surrounding district councils. Members were advised that the governance of CPE was a matter for the committee and that there was no voting member on the parking forum for the other district councils' schemes, although an observer could attend.



**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to:

- (1) agree the proposed changes to the agency agreement as set out in the report;
- (2) recommend the proposed changes to the county and city councils' respective cabinets for approval.

## **10. PROPOSED CAR PARK FEES AND CHARGES**

The head of city development services presented the report.

During discussion a member pointed out that the price increase was relatively modest (10p per hour), but that it should be reviewed each year to avoid a large increase in future. In response to a suggestion that the city council should increase car parking further and reduce the cost of park and ride to remove cars from the city centre, the chair pointed out that the city council controlled only 17% of car parking in the city and that increased car park fees would be undercut by other car park operators. Another member pointed out that the county council's budget was severely constrained and that there was an objective to make park and ride self-financing. The city agency/NATS manager said that park and ride offered an affordable option for commuters as it was cheaper than parking in the city centre all day, even with a season ticket.

**RESOLVED**, unanimously, to agree and recommend the proposed revised fees and charges as set out in appendices C and D of the report, to take effect from 18 November 2013, to the city council's cabinet for adoption.

## **11. MAJOR ROAD WORKS – REGULAR MONITORING**

The transportation and network manager and the capital programme manager answered members' questions and advised the committee that contractors carrying out works during peak times could be fined and that action would be taken.

**RESOLVED** to note the report.

CHAIR